

An Ideal Day at the Polls

Though poll workers and election officials are certainly an integral and indispensable component of Indiana's voting process, an informed voter can be just as important to a successful Election Day as the poll workers at your precinct. With this in mind, let's look at what you should expect to see at the polls.

Your voting experience starts as you approach the polling place. To avoid giving any candidate or party an unfair advantage, political signs and political discussion are not permitted inside the polling place. Any signs or lobbying from candidates or their supporters should be at least 50 feet away from the polling place, in most cases. This walkway, called a "chute" permits you a voting experience free from political signs and rhetoric keep in mind that informational signs such as instructions for machines or sample ballots are permitted, and the Indiana Voter's Bill of Rights is required to be displayed inside the polling place.

When you enter the polling area you will be asked by a poll worker to present a photo ID. If you are unable or unwilling to present photo ID, you always have the option of voting a provisional ballot. After presenting ID you will be asked to sign the poll book and verify that your address is listed correctly in the poll book. You may also be asked to update or verify your Voter Identification Number. This is simply your Driver's License number or the last four digits of your Social Security number and enables differentiation between the records of voters with similar names.

After you have signed the poll book and verified that your information is correct, you will either be given a ballot and directed to a voting booth or directed to the next available voting machine according to the voting system used in your county. At this time you may ask for assistance if you need it and begin voting.

Many polling locations used new voting machines for the 2006 elections. The Help America Vote Act is Federal Legislation passed in 2002 that required states to eliminate punch card and lever voting machines by Jan. 1, 2006. Indiana counties now use either Direct Record Electronic (DRE) Touch Screen machines or Optical Scan voting systems. A Direct Record Electronic machine allows the voter to view a ballot on a computer screen and mark his or her selections on the screen. Optical Scan lets the voter mark a paper ballot, which is then read by an electronic scanner that tabulates votes. For more information on the voting system used in your county please visit the Secretary of State website, www.sos.in.gov/elections/hava